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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRATISLAVA 000142

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/RPM

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [NATO](#) [LO](#)
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE TO SLOVAK GOVERNMENT ON SECURITY
CLEARANCE PROCESS

REF: A) BRATISLAVA 122 B) LAMORE-EDDINS EMAIL 3/13/09
(NOTAL)

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Eddins for reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) Summary: Charge conveyed U.S. views on the need for strict adherence to national laws regarding the issuance of security clearances to MFA Political Director Igor Slobodnik on March 18. Queried by Slobodnik, Charge acknowledged that U.S. concerns had been generated by press reports regarding the Director of the National Security Office (NBU), Frantisek Blanarik, but underscored that we were aware of several other questionable cases. Slobodnik took the points on board, noting that this highly sensitive issue would likely require action by Prime Minister Fico. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Charge delivered points outlining U.S. concerns about the integrity and consistency of Slovak procedures for granting security clearances (proposed ref a, and amended and authorized ref b). Embassy has been following for several months press reports detailing the existence of documents from Czechoslovak archives kept in Prague that strongly suggest that Blanarik was a willing informant of the former Czechoslovak Security Services (StB). If he were, according to Slovak law as we understand it, he would not be eligible for a security clearance himself, let alone be in a position to lead the agency that is charged with issuing such clearances.

¶3. (C) Charge underscored that, given the importance and sensitivity of information exchanged among Allies, it was imperative that every Ally fulfill with consistency, scrupulousness and impartiality, NATO-endorsed national requirements for such vetting. Even the appearance of bias or politically-influenced decisions could be damaging. The crux of the question is not Mr. Blanarik, who gets good marks for his performance at the NBU, but rather a broader question about system integrity and adherence to important national and NATO commitments.

¶4. (C) Slobodnik expressed regret that the Blanarik case was the impetus for the demarche, noting that he had been a very cooperative and professional partner for the MFA and had also played an integral role in assisting Western Balkan states to create indigenous institutions akin to the NBU. According to Slobodnik, NATO officials have praised Blanarik for this work. Charge reiterated that the demarche was not aimed at Blanarik, but rather was about the process. Furthermore, at Blanarik's request, Charge explained that he planned to meet with the NBU head personally to discuss our concerns.

¶5. (C) Slobodnik closed the meeting with a request (almost an admonition) that we not engage further with the media on this subject, because "once questions of national prerogatives and sovereignty are raised, there could be a train wreck" with

the Prime Minister's office. Slobodnik continued that if U.S. views are broadcast in the press, what should be a discussion about process and NATO commitments could turn into a backlash against perceived interference in Slovak internal affairs. (Note: In response to a question about the Blanarik case from the Slovak daily Sme, Charge had offered a generic comment that "although NATO recognizes and respects national procedures for managing all elements of the security clearance process, the fact that some of the information shared in NATO pertains to ongoing military operations makes it imperative that these national procedures are rigorous and that their requirements are honored.")

Comment and Conclusion

16. (C) Slobodnik delved briefly into the political dynamics of the Blanarik case. Blanarik's appointment to his current position followed a battle royal between Fico and coalition partner Vladimir Meciar over whose nominee would lead the Slovak Security Services. Fico insisted on his man; Meciar's consolation prize was the NBU slot. His choice, Blanarik, had served for several years as the Director General of the Defense and Security division in the Government Office during Meciar's notorious premiership. Although there are different theories circulating as to who is behind the recent "discovery" of the incriminating archival material, President Gasparovic has now called on Blanarik to resign. Gasparovic and Meciar are bitter enemies, and, of late, Meciar has been launching almost daily attacks on the President in an effort to damage his electoral prospects. Fico himself has seemed to relish the controversy -- as it implicates both Meciar (who

BRATISLAVA 00000142 002 OF 002

Fico would love to jettison after the next elections) and ex-PM Dzurinda (under whose government Blanarik was granted his current security clearance) -- deepening our doubts about the seriousness with which the senior GOS leadership is approaching this issue.

17. (C) Given coalition dynamics, Slobodnik's conclusion that this issue will ultimately have to be addressed by Prime Minister Fico is undoubtedly correct. The MFA clearly does not relish its role as a messenger and Slobodnik is concerned that PM Fico will interpret our demarche as foreign interference in Slovak affairs, one of his biggest bugaboos. Slobodnik frankly stated his concern that this matter could harm prospects for warmer relations between the U.S. and Fico. While we certainly hope Fico will receive our message in the spirit in which it was intended, given his tendency to equate any criticism as a personal attack, we are not optimistic.

18. (C) That said, our goal was and remains to make clear that Slovakia needs to acknowledge and maintain its international commitments, in this case with regard to the handling of classified material. But we continue to see the same disregard for honoring its obligations to the EU (on judicial and prosecutorial independence), to the OSCE and UN (on certain human rights issues), and to the business community (with regard to transparency and the sanctity of contracts). While some of the Fico government's disdain for commitments is more rhetorical than real, it nonetheless creates a climate in which personal loyalty or political expedience often appears to trump the rule of law.

EDDINS